

Advisory Council to the Division of Autism Services  
Minutes, March 18, 2009

MEMBERS PRESENT: Jennifer Carroll, Maggie Casciato, Judy Dowd, Ruth Eren, Jan Galloway, Chera Gerstein, Jacqueline Kelleher, David Daniel Klipper, James Loomis, Sara Louire, Sara Reed, Nikki Richer, Lois Rosenwald, Jonathan Ross, Stan Soby, Angela Spino, Joseph Stoliarski, Jennifer Ureta, Tricia Winter, Larry Wood and Robin Wood

MEMBERS ABSENT: Elaine Flynn, Mary Franco, Ann Gionet, Jane Thierfeld-Brown and Laura Digalbo

EX OFFICIO MEMBER: Kathy Reddington

The meeting opened with an opportunity for public comment. There were no members of the public present.

David Daniel Klipper stated that revised minutes of the 2-11-09 meeting had inadvertently not been circulated and would be circulated to the committee after this meeting. He also described the process of generating the letter sent to SCSU regarding its request to receive federal funds as a University Center of Excellence on autism and read the letter to the group.

Kathy Reddington made a presentation to the Council regarding the UCONN report. An executive summary of the report has been sent to legislators and she has not yet received any comments or questions. Members of the Council had the opportunity to ask questions and offer comments. One comment recommended that the individuals providing comments be identified if possible. Another member expressed gratification at the amount of positive response to the program as indicated by the survey results. Kathy indicated that at this time there is no additional funding for future studies. However, the data was generally collected by her staff and the suggestion was made that this data continue to be collected in the hope that future analysis can be performed.

Lois Rosenwald announced that April 8 will be Autism Day in Hartford. Members and families are invited to come, visit their legislators, and encourage others to come.

When the group was to discuss planning, members requested that we stay in a large group rather than split into small groups. Jacqui commented on the different 'pots' of stimulus money being distributed and this led to a lively discussion as to how the Advisory Council should respond. There was consensus that we should be proactive to try to keep the community of individuals with autism in the minds of individuals soliciting money.

For example, there is a significant amount of Plan B money that will be distributed to local school districts. After discussion, we decided that we would draft a letter to superintendents of these districts as well as special education directors calling their attention to the existing mandate to provide transition services and suggesting that they utilize some of these funds to hire a transition coordinator or obtain training to improve these services (there was a concern that school districts will be reluctant to fund new positions with only

two years of funding coming with them). We discussed the kinds of services that such a transition coordinator, properly trained, could bring to the school district: (a) staff training (it was suggested that people be directed to ASRC as a model for such training), (b) vocational training to enable clients to get vocational experience, job skills and community experience, (c) coaching and mentoring of clients, (d) social skills training, focusing on independence and community involvement, (e) ADLs, (f) Functional communication skills, and (g) behavioral supports. Jacqui and Robin agreed to write a draft of a letter that will be circulated to the Executive Committee for editing and finishing.

A motion was made, seconded and unanimously approved that letters such as this, which have time urgency attached to them, could be approved and sent out by the Executive Committee in the name of the Advisory Council.

We discussed similar ‘pots’ of money for which we should be in touch with the recipients. There is apparently a pool of money for Vocational Rehabilitation services. Kathy Reddington agreed to discuss the concept of a letter from the Advisory Council with Laurie DiGalbo and see if she had recommendations for a similar letter to be sent by us.

Chera Gerstein agreed to look at possible housing related pools of funds.

We suggested to Jacqui that identifying these opportunities was a good use of energy for the Data Committee.

We thought that an OpEd piece, timed to be in papers on April 8 for Autism Day, would be an excellent thing to come from the Council. Maggie, Chera and Sara agreed to develop a first draft of such a piece to submit to the Executive Committee. The plan is to have a finished piece by the end of the month and distribute it to all members so that they can try to have it placed in their local papers April 8<sup>th</sup>.

David Daniel recognized that we had departed from long term planning to focus on short term opportunities, but the group recognized that part of its mandate is to serve as a “bully pulpit”, and that we need to try to use that pulpit effectively. It was clear that we felt that a public outreach function ought to be part of our mandate.

Larry Wood discussed the UCONN study and suggested that we find a way to publicize it in such a manner so as to make clear that the cost of services for this population is manageable. He remarked that part of what had hindered the implementation of the study done a number of years ago were unrealistically high cost estimates of what it took to serve this population.

David Daniel indicated that he would be out of the country from March 30-April 13 and requested that materials being sent to the Executive Committee be sent in sufficient time for his being able to try to add some value to the review process before he left. He also complimented the Committee on the value of its work, and the meeting adjourned at noon.